

France hands over last base in Chad amid forced withdrawal

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N'Djamena, January 31 (RHC)-- The French army has handed over its last base during a military ceremony in the Chadian capital of N'Djamena following a forced withdrawal from the central African country.

Colonel Guillaume Vernet, spokesman for the armed forces general staff in Paris, on Thursday confirmed that "the Koussei camp was handed over today to the Chadian army."

Chad, for its part, said the handover of the base marks the end of France's military presence in the African country "according to the wishes of the high Chadian authorities."

The handover of the Adij Koussei base marks the end of France's military presence in the African country. In late November, Chad abruptly ended military cooperation with its former colonial ruler, and French troops began leaving the African country in late December.

French troops withdrew from their Faya-Largeau base in the north of the country on December 26, and on January 11 pulled out of a second base at Abeche.

Chadian authorities earlier declared that a January 31 deadline for the French withdrawal from the country was "non-negotiable." President Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno said the cooperation agreements with France had become "completely obsolete" in light of "the political and geostrategic realities of our time."

Soldiers and fighter jets from France have been stationed in Chad almost continuously since the country's independence in 1960. The largely desert country had been a key link in France's military presence in Africa and its last foothold in the wider Sahel region.

At its height, France's Sahel contingent numbered more than 5,000 troops as part of the anti-militant Operation Barkhane, which ended in November 2022.

French forces have already been forced to withdraw from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in the wake of military coups. They withdrew from Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in 2022 and 2023 after their militaries severed defense agreements with the former colonial power.

Paris's military presence in the Ivory Coast and Gabon is also being cut back following declining French influence across West and Central Africa. Senegal is also negotiating the withdrawal of French forces by the end of 2025.

The United States and France and some other Western countries stand accused of disrupting peace and security in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Protesters recently attacked the embassies of the U.S. and France in Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC. Several other foreign missions also came under attack on Tuesday.

Over the past decade, France has been forced out of more than 70 percent of the African nations where it previously maintained a military.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV and NEWS AGENCIES]

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